

**INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION**  
**PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**  
**LABOR ARCHIVES OF WASHINGTON**  
**UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON LIBRARIES SPECIAL COLLECTIONS**

**BILL PROCTOR OF ILWU LOCAL 10 & 19, PCPA**

**INTERVIEWEE:** BILL PROCTOR

**INTERVIEWERS:** HARVEY SCHWARTZ, CONOR CASEY

**SUBJECTS:** INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD; HENRY EUGENE MCGUCKIN; VIRGINIA ADAIR MCGUCKIN; WILLIAM JOSEPH MAHER; ROSCOE QUINCY PROCTOR; WORLD WAR II; IWW FLYING SQUAD; COMMUNIST PARTY; OAKLAND; ELEMENTARY SCHOOL; HIGH SCHOOL; SHELL SHOCK; POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER; STEPFATHER; SMITH-MCCARRAN ACT; RED BAITING; RED SCARE; RACISM; ANTI-RACISM; BLACK WORKERS; RED DIAPER BABY; OAKLAND BLACK COMMUNITY; BERKELEY; DIVERSITY; FIRE FIGHTING; JOB CORPS; CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF FORESTRY; B LIST; BOXCARS; HOOKS; SAN FRANCISCO TRANSPORT CLUB; ARCHIE BROWN; SOUTHERN AFRICA LIBERATION SUPPORT COMMITTEE; ASBESTOS; COFFEE; HIDES; SUGAR; FROZEN MEAT; BIRKENWALD; VIETNAM WAR; ANTI-WAR MOVEMENT; FBI; CUBA; VENCEREMOS BRIGADE; OLITA PROCTOR; KEVIN CASTLE; SOUTH AFRICA; APARTHEID; ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT; LEO ROBINSON; HERB MILLS; LOCAL 10; LOCAL 19; SEATTLE; DRUGS; SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER; SHOP STEWARD; STEADY WORKERS; 1971 ILWU STRIKE; 9.43 CLAUSE; EXECUTIVE BOARD; CRANE SAFETY COMMITTEE; DISPATCH; HIRING HALL; GEORGE GINNIS; EUGENE VRANA; GEORGE BENET; ARTISTS; WRITERS; PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION; MARRIAGE; MEXICO; RETIREMENT; FISHING; TROUT

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HARVEY SCHWARTZ 00:00:06

Okay. This is Harvey Schwartz. I'm in Vancouver, British Columbia, with Bill Proctor. Today is the 17th of September, 2024 in this part of the ILWU Pacific Coast pensions Association Oral History Project. Bill, can you tell me a little bit about yourself, just where you were born and when you were born?

BILL PROCTOR 00:00:28

I was born eight months after the Second World War in February of 1946, in Oakland California in the Kaiser hospital.

HARVEY 00:00:39

Right, okay. Tell me a little bit about your parents, if you would, what countries they came from.

BILL 00:00:47

My mom was Irish, Norwegian. Both her folks were first generation in the US. [pauses] My granddad's father jumped ship in the port of Boston, wound up in textile factories in Paterson, New Jersey. My mom's mother—that was my mom's father. My mom's mother was born to a Unitarian Norwegian family, and she taught schools at the Rosebud Reservation, Dakota reservation, along with her sister at age 18 and 17. Granddad was an organizer for the IWW from the age of 18,

HARVEY 00:01:54

Your grandfather?

BILL 00:01:55

My grandfather, named H.E. McGuckin, Henry Eugene McGuckin, member of the Flying Squad for the IWW [Industrial Workers of the World] in the nineteen-teens.

HARVEY 00:02:08

What town was he active in?

BILL 00:02:10

He was in Butte [Montana]. He was he was all over. He was on the Flying Squad. He rode a lot of rails. Actually, he left home at age nine, when a priest had put his hand on his pants, when my granddad was passing through the halls of school, Catholic school. My granddad reported it to his father, and his father beat him that night. Nine years old, my granddad left home. Luckily, he was taken in by a good hobo, taught him the rules of the rails, I guess you could call it. He was a small, nine year old, skinny kid, so he was good for the hobo kitchen, because he could get in the truck garden. He could get in the chicken coop. As a profession, he wound up being a cook. He cooked a lot in hobo camps, initially, in two pound coffee cans, as he used to say. And from there, he became a cook in lumber camps, and so on.

HARVEY 00:02:10

What do you mean by Flying Squad?

BILL 00:02:17

They rode the rails during the free speech movements, wherever there was trouble, they got on the rails and they would head that way.

HARVEY 00:03:30

What would they do then?

BILL 00:03:32

Soapbox [impromptu speeches] mostly, soapbox mostly, organizing work. His son, my uncle, published our grandfather's recollections, he wanted to call it recollections. It was published as The Memoirs of a Wobbly by Kerr Press.

HARVEY 00:03:54

Where was it published?

BILL 00:03:56

It was published by Kerr Press. I believe that's Chicago.

HARVEY 00:03:58

Kerr Press. You're right, of course. Okay, well—

BILL 00:04:06

My mom was a worker in a warehouse. Shortly after I was born, she achieved the job through Warehouse Local 6, had been a welder during the war. My dad was shell shocked, we call it PTSD now. He was shell shocked in the Second World War. He made five major landings in the South Pacific before his 18th birthday in the Navy,

he was a radar man. His tag said expendable. He carried a radar part along with four others, they carried the same part. One of them would make it, was the thought. He made it, but he made it pretty screwed up.

HARVEY 00:04:51

Yeah, maybe a little bit about the impact on his life. You know, you use the term now—is a little bit different. Traumatic and so forth.

BILL 00:05:07

Yeah, it's a bit different, but it's the same thing, shellshocked.

HARVEY 00:05:11

Yeah, you use the old term. How did it infect him?

BILL 00:05:17

You know, I don't truly know, Harvey. I didn't know my biological father until I was 44 years old. My mother and he separated before I was four, so I have one or two very vague memories of him.

HARVEY 00:05:32

What was his name, again?

BILL 00:05:33

His name was William Joseph Maher M-A-H-E-R. I am William Joseph Maher III by birth. I took my stepfather's name at age 16 when I had to get a Social Security card to get a job.

HARVEY 00:05:49

What was your mom's name?

BILL 00:05:50

My mom's name was Virginia Adair McGuckin, born October 4, 1926, on a mountaintop outside of Eugene, Oregon. Her birth was paid for in dried fruit and apricots.

HARVEY 00:06:07

What kind of politics did she have?

BILL 00:06:09

She joined the Communist Party when she was 14.

HARVEY 00:06:15

Well, you have quite a rich background.

BILL 00:06:17

Oh, yeah.

HARVEY 00:06:19

Would you say—Was she a major political influence on you?

BILL 00:06:25

Yes, yes.

HARVEY 00:06:27

She was mostly a single mother after your dad left?

BILL 00:06:31

For about two and a half years, and then she met my stepfather, which became the only father I knew, the man whose name I carry today.

HARVEY 00:06:44

And what was his job in political record like?

BILL 00:06:48

He and she met at Colgate Palmolive, as they both worked out of Local 6. He was an African American from a Black sharecropper family out of east Texas. He was the fourth of five sons. He actually worked as a casual on the docks in LA [Los Angeles], southern California immediately following the war, or during the war at the end of it, and got wind of the organizing drives that were taking place off dock in the Bay Area, and that maybe he could become a longshoreman there. He made the move north and wound up in the warehouse sector.

HARVEY 00:07:33

He ended up in the in the warehouse sector. Local 6?

BILL 00:07:37

Local 6, yes, East Bay. Local 6, East Bay.

HARVEY 00:07:41

Did you give me his name? Think you did.

BILL 00:07:44

He was born R.Q. Proctor, called Roscoe Quincy Proctor.

HARVEY 00:07:51

Okay. What was his politics like?

BILL 00:07:55

He was a [?diehard?] red. The Black red. In fact, when I was like 14 years old, he was indicted. I think it was named the Smith-McCarran-Kennedy Act, where he was ordered to register as an agent of a foreign power

because of his connection with the Communist Party USA, and subject to \$1,000 a day fine and five years in prison for every day he did not sign. Well, he was indicted a year after the date when he was supposed to sign. His trial took place in the Old San Francisco Mint by former governor, a Black man married to a white [woman]—well, they didn't get married until later. Judge [?Cherry?] had been the previous Alabama governor at some point. Anyway, Roscoe was tried along with a guy named Fred Thompson on the East Coast, I believe that was his name. They were tried. I guess Fred was tried over there in RQ—that's what we call family name for Roscoe was tried in San Francisco.

HARVEY 00:09:27

You mentioned RQ came—what country did he come from? You mentioned it already.

BILL 00:09:34

RQ, Roscoe?

HARVEY 00:09:37

Yeah, your mom's second husband, yeah.

BILL 00:09:41

Okay, my stepdad, Roscoe? Roscoe Proctor? He came from Texas.

HARVEY 00:09:47

He came from Texas. He's a Texan, okay.

BILL 00:09:49

Yes. The fourth son, fourth of five sons to a sharecropper.

HARVEY 00:09:54

Yeah, and which act was he—I mean, I'm trying to remember which act de was charged under, you mentioned it.

BILL 00:10:05

Charged as an agent of a foreign power under the Smith-McCarran Act, I believe it was.

HARVEY 00:10:09

Okay. Do you recognize that—The Smith Act is usually for people who are—

BILL 00:10:17

Roscoe Proctor vs. the United States of America.

CONOR CASEY 00:10:21

CP [Communist Party] memories.

HARVEY 00:10:23

Yeah, but I mean, normally under the Smith Act, most of the people were foreign born. Is that—

CONOR 00:10:31

I think some of them weren't.

BILL 00:10:32

Not true of Henry Winston, chairman of the Party.

CONOR 00:10:35

Among the CP leadership at that time.

HARVEY 00:10:38

Yeah. I'm trying—yeah, of course, yes. Okay, that's alright.



BILL 00:10:42

Roscoe proctor vs. the United States of America.

HARVEY 00:10:45

Okay, did they put him in jail for awhile?

BILL 00:10:49

No, he was never jailed. I don't think he was bailed either. I'm not certain how all that went down. I was 13, 14 years old.

HARVEY 00:10:57

Yeah, right, exactly. Well, tell me a little bit you're 13, 14 years old that time. Tell me a little about your early schooling, early life in Oakland.

BILL 00:11:11

My early life in Oakland was, well, was spent in West Oakland, which at the time, was the largest per capita African American community west of the Mississippi. I attended, mostly primarily Black elementary schools: Longfellow, Durant Lafayette.

Third grade Lafayette, it was preceding parents night, we were to draw artwork representing our family. I did a drawing with crayon that depicted a Black man and a white woman and me with red hair, and my little sister, who was of mixed marriage, holding my hand. The white teacher, who generally called on me because I was one of the two white students she had in the class if she wanted to ask the class a question, ridiculed me in front of the class. "Look at this." Showed it to—and the Black kids laughed, too. That sticks with me.

So most of my close relationships were with Black youth as I grew up, and in my teens, you could not convince me that I was not Black. I tried my best to be a turkey. [laughs] Affected certain southern Texas drawl, my style was whatever was current in my African American community, that was my style.

HARVEY 00:13:07

Did you get any trouble over that?

BILL 00:13:09

Well, it was good trouble. Got in good trouble with my dad, who took me to task and made it clear to me, I had a different role to play in the struggle for equality. I had a responsibility to deny my privilege and to work on my fellow man, the white population, who I had little contact with at the time, but as I got on the waterfront, it became clear to me the message he had conveyed at that time, and even before.

HARVEY 00:13:56

Did that present some tension to you at that time? I mean, you know this is a difficult position to be in, in some ways. You know, your parents are left wingers, and then you're in this position vis a vis the white community, and you're living in the Black community.

BILL 00:14:09

Well, gosh, by the time I was eight or nine years old, I knew we lived an alternate existence, that the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] wanted to talk to me at that age, that I was not to get in that car with them four guys in that Ford, the crew slowing by me, "Hey little boy, you want to ride home?" Or those that knocked on the door, I was the last key kid. Those that knocked on the door. "Can we talk with you or your parents here?" They were all—we just—whatever his name was from I Led Three Lives.

HARVEY 00:14:58

How did you deal with those guys, what'd you do about them?

BILL 00:15:01

They talk to you. "I can't talk to you." Close the door. Just don't talk to him.

HARVEY 00:15:15

Okay, so you get to be—where'd you go to high school?

BILL 00:15:18

Well, we moved out of West Oakland, when I was in the seventh grade. Went in my first year of junior high school. The first six weeks of that year were spent at Hoover Junior High in Oakland, which was, again, predominantly Black, maybe maybe 15 to 20% white working class and Latino. I went from there to South Berkeley, where I began to attend a very well-integrated school, Willard Junior High School. Our neighborhood

was very working class but well-integrated. Across the street from us, the whole seven or eight houses up the block were Japanese families, all of whom had been interred at one time. On our side of the street there was Black and white families every other house practically, probably ten houses up the block.

I had a very rude awakening when I tried to make friends at Willard Junior High School. I rode my three speed bike. It was used when I got it, and it looked used, but rode it and made friends with a white kid who had a nice shiny bike. And when school got over, I followed him up to his house, which was up toward the hills, and I had a sandwich which his mom made, and she obviously was a housewife, homemaker. Then he followed me down to our house on the flats. And he was very interested in our house, which was under remodeling. We made what had been a five room cottage into an eleven room home with five bedrooms, one wall at a time, with salvaged wood that was taken out of a lot of projects that were being done to make the highway systems in California, I guess. Anyway, he was very into what was going on. "Oh, can I break the plaster down off this wall?" He was very into it, until my dad arrived home from work. Black man showed up, he had to go, he had to leave. And the next day in school, he wouldn't talk to me. I bet I would see him pointing at me, talking to the white kid. That, for me, was a bit of an awakening.

HARVEY 00:17:59

Oh, yeah. Other examples of that?

BILL 00:18:03

It was like, "Okay, I know who my friends are. Back to West Oakland!"

HARVEY 00:18:09

Were there other examples of that at that point in time?

BILL 00:18:16

Not really. I think it became pretty well known what my family situation was in liberal, pretty well-integrated Berkeley, at the time, liberal as it was.

HARVEY 00:18:34

But the family also—well, may have had a left wing background. It did have a left wing background. But, I mean, was that known to like that kid over time and other kids? I mean, the question is, really, did you have a hard time through junior high and high school because of your family's politics? That's the question.

BILL 00:18:52

Oh no, no, no, no. As a matter of fact, we had a group that were basically all red diaper babies that got together that we had petitioned to ban the bomb we would go down and, I don't know if you know Oakland at all, but there were two large markets that were where everybody shopped on the weekend. It was [?Swan's?] Market and [?Housewives?] Market. Both of them occupied a full block, you know, and it was one of these places where you're going, and there's many stalls, and there's restaurants and there's produce, and there's a butcher and a fish market, and anyway, both.

HARVEY 00:19:39

And what is the point of that, relative to, you know, well, family issues and family—

BILL 00:19:45

Well, we had a community. We had a community, Black and white, Black and white.

HARVEY 00:19:50

And you all went to these markets?

BILL 00:19:50

Couple of Asians. Oh, we went, yeah, we went. We were organized by a woman named Billy Walker. She had two sons that were part of our group, also. You know, we, we did things that teenagers do. We went to the beach, we had beach parties, and we tried to, I guess, we did a certain amount of recruiting, one might say, of bringing new kids from time to time into our circle that some would stick around and some would be highly interested, but gone. [laughs]

HARVEY 00:20:33

Yeah, you'd mentioned that the house was being refurbished to have how many rooms? Was it—it's got eleven rooms?

BILL 00:20:43

It was five when we started, and it was nine. We took the roof off, we extended out the back, we went up.

HARVEY 00:20:50

Did you have brothers and sisters and stuff?

BILL 00:20:53

It was primarily my dad, my mom, a carpenter friend that taught in the Oakland Community College System, taught carpentry and workmates that he worked with in a warehouse. They would come over and they would pour concrete, or they would help with whatever was.

HARVEY 00:21:21

But how come you needed so many rooms?

BILL 00:21:26

Because my folks were organizers. The living room was, as I recall, thirteen by forty-two feet, thirteen feet wide, forty-two feet deep. And it was the result of having taken down, taking the living room, the dining room, and what had been the kitchen, and all that became the living room. The kitchen was put into what had been a sleeping porch for the previous owners, that became the kitchen. [sighs] As you came in the front door, there was an entryway, you would step a little bit to the right and go into the living room. To the right, there was a door that entered a bedroom, which, for some time was my grandmother's room, and over years, was a rented room. Where the bathroom was that remained a bathroom and another, a washroom slash bedroom was on the other side of that. And then upstairs was four bedrooms and a bathroom.

HARVEY 00:22:40

Right. And how did they use the houses for organizing?

BILL 00:22:47

People came down from Seattle for Marxist classes at the infamous Finn Hall, the old progressive Finnish community. We used their—our community, our socialist minded, communist community used it for progressive fundraisers and political events of one sort of another.

HARVEY 00:23:18

Sure, and where was the Finn Hall located at that time in Oakland?

BILL 00:23:21

10th Street, 10th Street below San Pablo, between, I believe, Berkeley Way and Hearst Streets in Berkeley.

HARVEY 00:23:29

Okay. Wow, okay.

BILL 00:23:32

It was eventually purchased by Pacific Press, I believe. Pacifica Press, which published the PW.

HARVEY 00:23:39

Okay, yeah, okay. What about high school?

BILL 00:23:46

All in high school, I was a ne'er do well. I decided I wasn't going to attend. I had other things to do. For instance, go to work a job. I attended school to go to my shop classes to get an education.

HARVEY 00:24:05

Yeah.

BILL 00:24:07

Wasn't doing well. I was a student of history, somewhat. But when it came to English, mathematics, you could have that. I could talk the language. I can add and subtract. What do I need algebra for? You know, but you got to take it, not me.

HARVEY 00:24:25

What high school was this?

BILL 00:24:26

Berkeley High School.

HARVEY 00:24:27

Oh, Berkeley High, okay.

BILL 00:24:28

I was actually put out of Berkeley High School and sent to McKinley, which was adult continuation high school, which had been started, I don't know if you know, it had been started as a school for the domestic help of the people who worked for the university people, primarily African Americans. When I went there, there were a lot of people, older people, getting their college education, along with us teenage us bad teenagers, which weren't so bad.

HARVEY 00:24:51

Yeah. Did you get your GED from there?

BILL 00:25:02

I never got my GED. I basically walked away from school six weeks before graduation. I went to fight fires in Southern California. I signed up for a CD, California Division of Forestry youth camp, which was a pilot project for the Job Corps financed by the federal government, but with the State Division of Forestry. And I had this notion at the time that I wanted to be a forest ranger, because I had spent my summers in the mountains with our grandparents, and trout fishing was my thing, and hunting had become a part of my life at that point. Interesting note, I made my first kill of a deer, and I stopped hunting. I could not stand what I had done. Killed a lot of rabbits, though.

HARVEY 00:25:56

What part of Sierra Nevada were you used to?

BILL 00:25:59

I'm sorry?

HARVEY 00:26:00

What part of the Seirra Nevada?

BILL 00:26:02

Plumas County, mostly. Quincy, California. Quincy area, Feather River country. Yeah, my grandparents had—my granddad, he put in two trout ponds on this place, and he sold—you could fish his trout ponds, and it was 10 cents an inch, or \$3 a yard, and I caught a lot of trout while granddad was off at work in the restaurant at the hotel in Quincy. Yeah.

HARVEY 00:26:36

What was the firefighting job like?

BILL 00:26:41

One of the best and most formative periods of my life. Hot, hard work, ground crew, Southern California, San Bernardino County. It's called Oakland Forestry Youth Camp. It had been a prisoner camp prior to that, and it is today. Sixteen to twenty-one year olds made up the camp. There were about 240 of us broken up into various sub-brigades of twenty, twenty-five. I was handed a brush hook and told, "this is your tool," as others were handed other tools.

And for the first month of actual fire duty after we got our training, which was only like two weeks in, wasn't very much of a training actually. But you know, what we did was we whacked line, we cut line, and if we had, if we were near a road and the pumper could be with us, we would have a pumper for support to put the fire out on us, because the fire's right here. If it's burning, you throw it into the fire. If it ain't burning, you throw it this way, [claps hands] and you jack it. We wore fucking [?fatigue?], no fire retardant shit. Aluminum half got hot as hell. Mostly brush fires, some scrub oak.

After a month, my crew leader left and the California Division of Forestry ranger who was responsible for my crew decided I would make the best replacement for him, and I became the crew leader. We fought fires for forty bucks a month. I got a pay raise to sixty bucks a month as the crew leader. Crew leader was also lead hook, which meant you determined the fire line for your crew to follow, and you could never get too far ahead of them, but you could never let them get too close.

HARVEY 00:29:04

You're about sixteen, seventeen, eighteen at this time,?

BILL 00:29:07



I was seventeen, I became eighteen. I signed up for six months originally, and decided I would stay another six. I said, a lot of them were court ordered. A lot of these young men were court ordered. But my mom had seen an article in the paper, and I wanted to be a forest ranger, and it was kind of like this could be an intro into that, but I loved it, man. I fought on three fires in that year. We did a lot of road maintenance, a lot of pine cone harvesting for reforestation projects. I learned what a thank you ma'am [road bump] is, putting in, maintaining roads. And then I came home from that.

HARVEY 00:30:06

There was no chance to stay on?

BILL 00:30:09

No, after the year. I decided, well, let me see about life. I was told, "You know, you're going to have to get some college education to be a ranger. You want to get a BA," I think it was. Well, that screwed it up! [laughs]

HARVEY 00:30:27

So you go home?

BILL 00:30:28

I went home to the Bay Area, found a job working for outfit called Birkenwald. They were making walk-in refrigerators that were four by eight [?plywood?] panels that you could clip together, and they were insulated. There was a unit that they put on, a refrigerator unit, and we were told that it was for food supplies for our troops in Vietnam. I'm watching TV, and I saw body bags going into them, and that blew the whole thing. But I was working five and a half days a week, making more money than any nineteen year old to be seen. I gave up that job.

HARVEY 00:31:18

What was the name of the company again, just to get that?

BILL 00:31:20

Birkenwald. It was on Delaware, below [?Fourth?] in Berkeley.

HARVEY 00:31:30

And why did you decide to give up the job?

BILL 00:31:36

One, I had more money than I knew what to do with that job. It was a good Sheet Metal Workers Union job.

HARVEY 00:31:44

It was union job.

BILL 00:31:46

Five and a half days a week, getting overtime. But that and my objection to the war, plus I had gotten my induction noted while I was—When I left the camp fighting fire, I left out something. Six months later, I got a call from the assistant camp director asking me if I was working. I was not working. “You have a job if you want it, if you apply to the Bureau of Reclamation for a job with the Job Corps.” So I was six months a counselor for the Job Corps. In those six months, I did four months of checking beds at night to make sure the young men my age weren't sneaking off to the little town with forty people in it, that they had a girlfriend down there. That was my job. And I told him, after four months, I said, "I'm not being a counselor. I'm not talking with the kids. I'm just guarding them, guarding you from them."

HARVEY 00:32:48

Yeah, yeah.

BILL 00:32:50

So I left there after six months to resist—Oh, I turned in my resignation because I got my induction physical, and I know I gotta resist this. I can't do it from up here in Weaverville. I got to do it from down in the Bay Area. Contacted Ann Fagan Ginger, who was one of the attorneys for my dad, along with John Abt, was the lead attorney.

"Well, you know, your dad just won his case, just was acquitted."

"Oh, no kidding, yeah."

"Well, don't answer the questions."

I'm playing with—"Should I go in drunk? Should I take some LSD before I go in? Should I try to act like I'm gay, or should I try to avoid it in some way?" She advised, "Just be yourself." It was the best advice you could have ever given.

So anyway, I signed basically the across the security, or the loyalty oath, "Have you now, are you now, or have you ever been, have you ever known [a member of the Communist Party]?" Every long, long, long list, check the box, check the box. I just wrote across, "I refuse to answer on the grounds of the First, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments of the US Constitution, as cited in the case of *Roscoe Proctor v. the United States*." And I'm William Proctor, as I'm scribbling my handwriting across the wide area of the sheet.

HARVEY 00:34:37

And how did that go?

BILL 00:34:38

A big master sergeant comes and stands over me says, "Boy, they gonna throw you under the jail. You take this and come back tomorrow." So I took it, I went home, went and saw Ann. She said, "Nothing's wrong with it, Willie," because she still called me, Willie. "Nothing's wrong with it, Willie, just take it back and give it to him." I took it back and I gave it to him, and he looked at me and said, "Okay." And that was it.

Until sometime later, I got a call from the FBI and military intelligence, they wanted an interview. I made two appointments, which I did not keep, and Ann got wind of it. She said, "If they call you again and you make an appointment, you better go." So I went. Kenny Cloke had just graduated from Boalt Law School [University of California, Berkeley]. He came with me not as my attorney, but as a legal assistant, they called it. Anyway, and we had an interview with Army Intelligence, the FBI, they knew I had—they knew everything about me. They knew that I had graduated California firearm school at age eleven with a marksman's rating, because I wanted to hunt, to get a license, you could only get it at twelve, but to fill out the class, to justify the class, they took me as an eleven year old. They knew that. They knew that I had applied for conscientious objector status. I had to explain why I had not returned the papers, because I didn't qualify. I don't have a religious objection. If it were the Second World War, I'd be signing up. That's how that went.

HARVEY 00:36:11

And what was the interview like? Can you describe that in some detail?

BILL 00:36:15

I thought it was friendly. The FBI older guy, he got sick of me and left. He just left, never came back. And the young guy from Army Intelligence, he could have been twenty-two, twenty-three years old, he turned off the recorder, and we had a discussion, and he offered me his hand at the end of the discussion. I shook his hand. I mean, you know. And then I got a [?one wide?] deferment.

HARVEY 00:36:43

And then you got a [one wide?] deferment.

BILL 00:36:44

Now I don't know if that was because of my occupation before I turned in my resignation, or whether it was political. I think it was political.

HARVEY 00:36:52

Yeah. I would imagine so, yeah. And I do remember the long form that you had to fill out, and all that.

BILL 00:37:00

Well, you know, they asked me, "You know we can draft you anyway as a poor security risk."

"As a poor security risk? I didn't finish high school! I know where I'm going. I'm going to the front line with the Black and the brown brothers that didn't graduate high school like me!"

"Well, you know you could go to Leavenworth [Kansas]."

"Yeah, I know that, too. Wherever you send me, I got no alternative but to organize. I come from a family of organizers. You think I'm sitting on my thumbs?" That was basically the end of that.

HARVEY 00:37:37

[laughs] That's just wonderful. Okay, so then, what do you do now? I mean you're still looking for a job of some sort?

BILL 00:37:50

Yeah, I was banging around, working. I was doing a lot of, like, not real apprentice carpentry, but people would need some hammering work done because of the experience I had on the house, and they knew it. You know, I did a little bit of that. But I got wind that—it would have been about mid-1966 I got wind of the B list opening up on the San Francisco waterfront. 1967.

HARVEY 00:38:26

How'd you get wind of that?

BILL 00:38:27

I think it was from Archie Brown, quite frankly, that might have inquired of books. Did I have a job yet? And Archie was one of my sponsors. The other was somebody from the [ILWU] International, I think it was Bill Chester. I'm not sure about that, though.

HARVEY 00:38:51

It seems quite reasonable though.

BILL 00:38:53

Yeah. So went through that process and became a longshoreman and darn near lost my job because, once again, the money was too good. More than a twenty-one year old kid needed. One day paid my rent. Who needs to be available 70% of any thirty days, anyway?

HARVEY 00:39:16

Right. Okay, so you're twenty-one when you get your B list, okay. What happened? You signed up to an application, then what happened after that? Were you called in?

BILL 00:39:30

It went well, showed up for my physical sometime in, I believe it was April of '67. Went through a physical process and an orientation and received a letter to report June 6th, '67, to the hall for induction as a B man.

HARVEY 00:39:54

Were you interviewed? Did you have an interview?

BILL 00:39:57

Oh yeah, there was an interview with the B man's committee. You know, I really don't remember a whole lot about it.

HARVEY 00:40:03

Okay, just on the verge of the ILWU part of your life. Were there any demonstrations or actions against the war in Vietnam, or civil rights that you recall that you participated in?

BILL 00:40:19

Yes.

HARVEY 00:40:19

Do you have a highlighter too, like, you know, a detail you remember?

BILL 00:40:24

No I cant say. I just would participate, would be there, curious. I walk with everybody else, you know.

HARVEY 00:40:30

Yeah, no confrontation.

BILL 00:40:32

Would talk it up on the job, you know. But yeah, as a B man, my first three years, kind of hard to be real politically active as a B man, you don't want to—You can be testing the waters, but you may not want to get too far.

HARVEY 00:40:50

Okay, you remember your first day on the job in the waterfront?

BILL 00:40:57

Sadly, no, sadly, I don't.

HARVEY 00:41:00

You don't. Okay. What did you do most of the time during those first three years as a B man?

BILL 00:41:09

Lot of coffee, lot of discharge of coffee, frozen meat from Australia, shoveled sugar up at C&H.

HARVEY 00:41:28

What do you mean by that?

BILL 00:41:31

Hides.

HARVEY 00:41:31

Hides?

BILL 00:41:31

Lot of hides. There was still a significant amount of break bulk work at the time. Everything was not yet in containers.

HARVEY 00:41:41

Right. Can you describe working hides for me?

BILL 00:41:51

When it come to working hides, there's the receiving of the hides on the dock, and there's the loading of the hides aboard the ship. Receiving of the hides takes place in a boxcar that comes some from somewhere in the innocuous Midwest. We'll have hides of cows and bulls, bulls tend to be bigger, heavier, and boxcars that have

come across the country through the heat with them hides, settling down on each other and becoming like glued to each other. You had this—You had to, sometimes almost get a crowbar to separate them from one another. They were tied with little hemp ropes that were twine, not rope. Sometimes you would grab them by the twine to pick them up, and the twines would break, and you'd wind up with this unfolded hide, dripping of blood, salt, bile. You'd place that on a pallet board until you built a significant mode, and that would then go to the dock, and then you'd build another load in the box car.

Okay, so those pallet loads are then, at some point, shifted to the ship, hoisted by the traditional standing gear, where you had a yard and a mid and you just—winches to hoist out the pallets or hoist them aboard. You would then—Quite often, they would, they would prefer the hides to be in the number one hatch. I don't know why. Maybe because of what we call a shear, which is the point of the ship, and the way it flares out to the bottom. You would take those hides and build—you would make, try to make a block as best you could. They were irregular in size and shape, but you would try to make a block that would tie them in place. You got to bear in mind that all of these hides had a layer of fat inside, so they would, when exposed to the air and the heat, they would begin to get a little slippery. I had experiences where we built a wall that was almost chest high, we knew that we were going to have to build the next—you would work so high, and then you would come out and work again, so high, and then work again. Come back from lunch, and what we had built before lunch had now split. It was now just an amorphous man. If you didn't use enough dunnage to help tie them in place, dunnage being wood, yeah, you could wind up underneath a bunch of hides. Though it never happened to me. There were stories about it.

HARVEY 00:45:09

Yeah. I understood it was very unpleasant working hides.

BILL 00:45:12

Very unpleasant, except working that boxcar. Even though you might open that boxcar up and it'd be crawling with maggots and flies. There was an older Swede, that was his specialty. If you got to work in the Port of Oakland—I can't remember his name. You had a boxcar to do, and you were done for the day. You would often work into the lunch hour, maybe a half hour, but you were done for the day. When I found that out—the first time I worked that job, after that, I tried to get it when I could. I only got it one or two times after because that old man knew what he was doing. He laughed at me when I put on the apron and the boots and the gloves. He went up and he hugged it. He said, "This is the way you do it, kid, let's go." You were done shortly after lunch, if not by lunch, with that boxcar. I don't know if it was a special deal he had with the company that he'd just do a boxcar, but he was an old timer who knew what he was doing.

HARVEY 00:46:26

You remember his name? Okay. Did you have to use hooks on them? I understand there were specialty hide hooks?

BILL 00:46:28



No, I do not. No, that's the first I've heard of a specialty hide hook. No, the only real, well—

HARVEY 00:46:48

Maybe I was misinformed. Go ahead, yeah.

BILL 00:46:51

I don't doubt. I don't doubt that there may have been a specialty hook for that. Longshoremen are so ingenious about something that will give them an edge. I certainly used a Japanese hook, the long straight hook, a lot for working crates, cotton hook when we worked cotton, and coffee hooks. The employer didn't like coffee hooks at all.

HARVEY 00:47:25

Now the coffee hook, is that a little guy?

BILL 00:47:29

Small hook, fits in the hand. You can almost hide the whole hook in your hand.

HARVEY 00:47:36

How many teeth?

BILL 00:47:37

They didnt like it because it would tear some of the bags.

HARVEY 00:47:39

Yeah, I get it. How many teeth did it have?

BILL 00:47:41

Some three. Some had just two and some had like, three prongs.

HARVEY 00:47:50

What was your favorite product to work?

BILL 00:48:00

It might sound funny, frozen meat. Hour in, hour out. Hour in the freezer, hour out the freezer. Sometimes you could work a deal, two in, two out: two hours in, three hour lunch, two hours in, go home, or vice versa. Everybody would get the four hour lunch. Got a little cold at times, particularly your feet, but as a rule, yeah.

HARVEY 00:48:31

How do you tolerate that for like an hour?

BILL 00:48:34

Keep moving. Keep moving. Yeah.

HARVEY 00:48:39

Okay. Any other work situations that you recall that I've missed?

BILL 00:48:47

Oh, sack rice in Sacramento was always a workout.

HARVEY 00:48:55

Why?

BILL 00:48:56

Why?

HARVEY 00:48:57

Yeah.

BILL 00:49:02

On operations where they required a lot of hand jive, a lot of handwork, a lot of good conversation takes place. There's a lot of talk about the union, there's a lot of talk about family, there's a lot of talk about the state of affairs. Unfortunately, with the advent of containers and the industry as it is today, for the most part, workers sit in a machine by themselves, or they might have a partner to drop lashings with. But for the most part, the concept of a partner is gone. It's a catch can deal for pretty much these days. Hard to have a partner that you can count on working with.

HARVEY 00:49:52

Yeah, yeah. You mentioned you were—actually, when you start out, you were interviewed. Did you start out as a B man or as a [unintelligible]?

BILL 00:50:03

As a B-man.

HARVEY 00:50:04

You started out as a B-man at that point. Okay, so there was no casual category at that moment.

BILL 00:50:08

No, at that time, if they needed casual work, as they called the Local 6 East Bay or the Local 6 West Bay hall and said, "We need a couple." And my dad got some of that work. Interestingly, my dad applied for the '59 B list, the '63 B list, the '66 B list, and the '67 B list when I did, and he was denied it each time, still a dues paying member of Local 6.

HARVEY 00:50:33

Ever get an inkling why? Did you ever get any reason why?

BILL 00:50:44

Some of it was had blood pressure issues. I don't doubt that he had hypertension issues as a Black man, that's very common. But I know that he prepared for them, for his physicals each time. And he, you know, he really wanted to be a longshoreman in '67 he was told he would never make the B list, but his son would have a job if he backed off. Evidently, he had some dirt somewhere. I don't have any idea who it was, but learning that, he was told I would have a job, there's a reason why he was told that. I don't know what it is.

HARVEY 00:51:37

So he backed off at that moment.

BILL 00:51:39

Yeah he did, and shortly thereafter, he went to work for the national Party in New York.

HARVEY 00:51:45

Really?

BILL 00:51:45

For the CPUSA, '69, yeah.

HARVEY 00:51:50

Okay, so what happened in 1970 did you get to be an A man at that time?

BILL 00:51:59

1970?

HARVEY 00:51:59

Yeah.

BILL 00:52:00

Yeah. I got my book in 1970. Yes, but in 1970 I also got a leave from the job, from both the employer and the union to have an educational experience in Cuba. I went to Cuba and cut cane for two months with the Brigada Venceremos [Venceremos Brigade], with the second contingent. The first contingent was in November of 1969, I went with the second contingent in February of '70.

HARVEY 00:52:04

Did you? And why did you decide to do that?

BILL 00:52:36

It was one way of expressing my opposition to the war in Vietnam, and that Cuba had pledged a large portion of their harvest of sugar to the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people engaging US imperialists.

HARVEY 00:53:00

Yeah, it's probably obvious, but sometimes I ask a question to which I may think I know the answer, but I don't want my answer. You understand, that's obvious, I guess. Okay, so you got to do that.

BILL 00:53:17

It was another of the best experiences of my life.

HARVEY 00:53:21

Why do you say that?

BILL 00:53:31

For me, it was an expression of my international interest in peace and freedom. It was a way for me to express my support for the right of the Cuban people to self determination. It was me as a young man who considered himself something of a revolutionary to explore at a certain level how the Cuban people did it. And a lot of my friends [laughs] were going.

HARVEY 00:54:20

Who went with you, do you recall?

BILL 00:54:22

Beg your pardon?

HARVEY 00:54:22

Did anybody from Local 10 go with you?

BILL 00:54:27

No, no, I was the only one from Local 10.

HARVEY 00:54:32

Did you make long term friends in Cuba? People you stayed in contact?

BILL 00:54:37

That was my initial visit to Cuba, when I returned, I advised my sister, my kid sister, eight years my junior, that she should go to Cuba and see what's happening, because there's a lot of people that look like her. She's the product of a Black and white marriage. She was also very athletically inclined at the time, and unfortunately, the stigma that she might be gay, even at fifteen years of age, being a big girl, being athletically inclined, she was beginning to feel uncomfortable in her skin. She went a year and a half after I did. Because of the Party connection, she got an invitation to return to finish her education. She went back at the age of sixteen, and she lived for twenty-two years in Cuba.

HARVEY 00:55:34

Oh, my goodness.

BILL 00:55:35

So I visited six times, two times with the Venceremos Brigade. I ostensibly was with them, but I went in advance of them, and I stayed behind to spend time with my sister. My sister, I don't know if this is [?pertinent?] to the interview, but my sister interviewed—My sister translated for the Cuban government sitting across the

table from US and South African armed forces in Angola. She also interpreted for negotiations that were going on in Ethiopia. So proud of my baby sister.

HARVEY 00:56:24

What's her name?

BILL 00:56:25

Olita.

HARVEY 00:56:26

Okay.

BILL 00:56:26

Olita Proctor.

HARVEY 00:56:27

Got it, yeah.

BILL 00:56:31

She got religion. She's a communist Catholic [laughs].

HARVEY 00:56:34

Wowie, did she come back to United States after twenty-two years?

BILL 00:56:38

She did, she came back. Our mother was terminal with cancer. Olita came back to assist Mom in her final days, and Mom lived four years after that. Yeah, she now lives in East Palo Alto, California.

HARVEY 00:56:56

My goodness, okay. So you get your book. Well, you—

BILL 00:57:04

So when we got back, I got back like May 10th of 70. I had a letter that said, "Your initiation fee is eighty bucks. And you'll get your full book, you'll be an A member." So in June, I was made a full member.

HARVEY 00:57:32

How did life change being an A book guy?

BILL 00:57:37

Oh, not much. [laughs] It didn't. Certainly offered more freedom to choose what you did, to take a job or decide to back away and see if you get something different. As a B man, you're pretty much in the position to better take this job that's offered. For me, it became a much nicer—As I said, I almost lost my job because of availability issues. For me, once you get a book, it's not an issue. You work one day a month, pay your dues. You may not make your qualifying year. But you can stay active in the union.

HARVEY 00:58:29

Yeah, sure.

BILL 00:58:32

I've never been a hard hitter. I've always found that I can make a good living at 1500 to 1700 hours a year. In my forty-two plus years, I think I have three years over 2000 hours. Doubling back, you can have it.

HARVEY 00:58:52

Sure. Were you politically active during that time in either inside the union or outside of it?

BILL 00:58:59

Oh, yeah. Well, I functioned with the San Francisco Transport Club in the Party.



HARVEY 00:59:05

San Francisco, which club?

BILL 00:59:06

San Francisco Transport Club of the Party. There was Teamsters, railroad, longshore.

HARVEY 00:59:19

What'd you do for them or with that?

BILL 00:59:21

I was just a club member that was with Archie Brown and Karl and Elaine Yoneda.

HARVEY 00:59:31

What I mean is, you know, was there any special events you were involved in, that you helped organize, that you went to?

BILL 00:59:39

I was certainly was active around the issue of anti-apartheid struggle in Local 10. I worked closely with Leo [Robinson] in the Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee in Local 10.

HARVEY 00:59:58

Worked closely with who?

BILL 00:59:59

The Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee in Local 10.

HARVEY 01:00:03

But you mentioned—

BILL 01:00:04

Leo Robinson.

HARVEY 01:00:05

Oh, Leo Robinson, okay.

BILL 01:00:05

Yeah, I worked closely with Leo.

HARVEY 01:00:07

That's what I thought, yeah.

BILL 01:00:09

I was the secretary of the committee, he was the chair.

HARVEY 01:00:16

Did you run for offices in the Local, or serve on committees?

BILL 01:00:25

No, I served as a shop steward when Herb Mills was the chief steward, because he asked me to. He had his campaign against asbestos going on, very successful campaign, I must say, because I stopped two fucking ships, only through the training that Herb offered. I found what I thought was asbestos on the combing below decks, collected a little bit of it, went up to show it to some old timers. One of them said, "Get that shit away from me, that's asbestos," and that was enough for me. Called George Kaye, the business agent, George came out, shut the ship down. We were stood by until three o'clock in the afternoon, paid six hours, called back for the next

day. We got back to the ship next day, and there were people with spacesuits on, vacuuming the whole ship out. I was active with the Stewards Council under Herb. I kind of went into a tailspin for a good while.

HARVEY 01:01:48

How so, how does that—

BILL 01:01:49

I had a bad experience with drugs, heavy drugs, cocaine. Actually, that's why I wound up in Seattle. Actually, my partner got me out of a crack house, and we had been talking about making it to Alaska, staying in the camper, and making big money. He got me out of the crack house, and we got as far as Seattle, and that was far enough for me. I didn't know where to go get my stuff. The geographical change for me worked, and I stayed three years as a traveler in the port before I put in for transfer, put in for open door reciprocal transfer, was accepted.

HARVEY 01:02:47

Who was your partner?

BILL 01:02:49

Who was my partner?

HARVEY 01:02:50

At that time, yeah. The guy who helped you?

BILL 01:02:52

If you have seen us today or at any of the—Victor Gallardo. Victor Gallardo, yeah.

HARVEY 01:03:06

Okay. Now, when did you leave for Seattle?

BILL 01:03:13

May of '85.

HARVEY 01:03:14

1985, okay. We gotta roll back a little bit and talk about 1984, and there was a ten or eleven day—

BILL 01:03:24

The Kimberley.

HARVEY 01:03:25

Kimberley, yeah.

BILL 01:03:25

November of '84.

HARVEY 01:03:27

It's called the Nedlloyd Kimberley vessel. Can you recount a little bit, just a tiny bit for the camera, what the issue was, but mostly we want what you did yourself during that time.

BILL 01:03:43

Mostly what I did was take what Leo told me to do and run with it, which wasn't really much, just show up. Just show up. Find your voice. He encouraged me to find my voice.

HARVEY 01:04:04

How'd you do that?

BILL 01:04:05

By going to the mic and talking. By going to the mic and expressing my thoughts, my desires, what I thought we should be doing. How central it was to me to—

HARVEY 01:04:22

Okay, for the camera. This is the anti-apartheid?

BILL 01:04:26

Yes. This is the work of the Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee.

HARVEY 01:04:31

Right, 1984, okay. Anything specific you did that you could remember?

BILL 01:04:41

The outreach that the committee did, mostly Leo is responsible for, to the religious community, to the union community, primarily teachers of the city of San Francisco, African American women teachers. They turned out the balance of the people for any demonstration that took place at the Nedlloyd Kimberley. It wasn't longshoremen. Certainly we were there, and we had lined up enough of the members of the local that said they would take the job, but they would not work South African cargo when called upon to do so. And that was a lot of what I did, trying to make sure that people not only would commit to do it, but once having committed that they actually took a job, you know, that ship's in tonight. Now you're gonna take a job. You know, press them a little bit. That went on, yeah.

HARVEY 01:05:52

Did you work with Jack Heyman at that time also?

BILL 01:05:55

No, I left the local, actually, before Jack Heyman was in the local he was on the friends of our committee, he was he was around the friends.

HARVEY 01:06:05

He was in IBU [Inland Boatmen's Union] still at that point, I guess. Okay, so then you have difficulties. Is there anything more to say about that? Because that's a big deal, a big event, 1984, and you're known as one of the participants, one of the upstanding people.

BILL 01:06:22

I'm just Joe Higgins, you know, I'm just a guy, a guy who knows how to run a mimeograph machine, a guy who knows how to pass out leaflets. You know, I've never aspired to be a leader of anything, never, never, never. I'm a guy who just wants to do his duty and do right, do good.

HARVEY 01:06:44

Okay, so anything more to be said about the drug problem before we move on to Seattle?

BILL 01:06:57

Oh, it was a scourge. It was terrible, San Francisco. I don't know what to say about it. It was terrible. The dealer was a member right there in the hall. "What you want? You can get it. You can get it on loan." You know, it was terrible, it was terrible. And not a proud—

HARVEY 01:07:24

Yeah, of course, of course. People run into things, you know. Okay, so you go up to Seattle, and how is that different from working out of Local 10, you're now working out of Local 19.

BILL 01:07:40

Well, you're a stranger. If you show up, they don't know you. They don't know what you do, what you like, what you're about. So they're curious, of course. Interestingly, none of the membership was standoffish. I was welcome. I remember being welcomed by two people to the port. One of their names was Nelson [?Mabius?], the other was Louis Gray. Both of them heard that I was from San Francisco, they were both Black, and they both welcomed me, definitely.

HARVEY 01:08:28

Wow, that's very interesting.

BILL 01:08:29

They didn't know anything about me and my participation. They they just knew I was from Local 10, and that was enough for them.

HARVEY 01:08:38

Well, I don't know, they might have known about you, because, you know, the anti-apartheid group, they had a high profile.

BILL 01:08:46

Yeah, but I don't know that—"Billy Proctor. I mean, Who's he?" Really! [laughs]

HARVEY 01:08:56

Your name is always mentioned with that group. It's kind of an honorific sort of label.

BILL 01:09:03

Yeah, I guess, yeah. And I guess my name has to be there for some reason or another.

HARVEY 01:09:09

[laughs] Anyway, so you're welcomed by these two guys?

BILL 01:09:14

Yeah. And, as I say, interestingly, they're both African American. My partner and I, we had a travel letter for Seattle, which means you show up at their executive board, they'll take five a month, the one per hundred of the membership. So, the two of us show up, we're a week late for the travelers meeting. So what's what makes the most sense? How are we going to work? How are we going to work this next month? Well, we'll investigate working off the floor in the various ports. So where's the first port to head to? Tacoma, and out from there, right?

We show up in Tacoma, probably ten o'clock in the morning. We walk in the hall. There's a guy sitting in an easy chair with his feet on the desk, his cap over his eyes. I walk up to the counter, I clear my throat. Guy listening in the cap says, "No work for casuals today, fellas." I cleared my throat again, this time I have my book out. "We are casuals were book members from Local 10. We were a week late for the travelers meeting in

Seattle with our letter. We're wondering what the work situation is off the floor in Tacoma." This guy who some called the Golden Greek, I called him asshole, he looked us up and down, and he said, "You can work in Seattle one week in advance of a letter so we can check you out. You can't work in Seattle till then." This was George Ginnis.

HARVEY 01:10:59

Yeah, Ginnis, okay.

BILL 01:11:00

I told him, "Well, you can pay the payroll with your mama, because we are members of the ILWU and we don't need to work here." Had there been another member of Local 23 there, we'd have probably had to fight.

But three weeks later, there's a president's meeting in Seattle. Joe Lucas comes up from Local 10, Bill Watkins, the secretary, and I can't remember the released business agent's name, a Latino from 10. I attended the meeting to observe. Joe Lucas asks me, "You have transportation, Proctor?"

"Yes, I have a car."

"Well, Ginnis has invited us down to view the intermodal operation that's going in at Tacoma." It was new, intermodal was new.

So next day, I give them a ride down there. I let the three of them go into the hall first. I followed them by about thirty seconds, and when George Ginnis saw me, that was the end of the perpetual coffee pot. "Hey, fellas, I got something to do. Can we get this going?" So we immediately went outside. George Ginnis gets in his truck, but we had written down, I'm driving, Joe Lucas sitting next to me, Bill Watkins in the back seat, and the relief BA behind me. We are in the hall, we leave the hall, the Tacoma hall, we go outside. George Guinness gets in his truck, shuts his door and starts his car, and obviously, Joe Lucas has to ride with me. It was an illustration to me of certain sentiment expressed. So we followed him to one place, and he got out of his truck, and we got out, and I didn't bother to get out. They got out, and he pointed and he said, whatever he said to them, they got back in my car, and he got back in his truck, and we followed him to another place. Man didn't have the decency to ask the president of Local 10 to ride with him in his truck. I don't know why, but I have an idea.

HARVEY 01:13:20

Yeah, was Lucas the president at that time?

BILL 01:13:25

Joe Lucas was the president, yes.

HARVEY 01:13:29

And he's African American.



BILL 01:13:31

Yes, he is. And Bill Watkins was married to an African American woman.

HARVEY 01:13:37

And it sounds like Ginnis was not too happy with those guys.

BILL 01:13:44

Tacoma has a sort of history when it comes to hiring a Black.

HARVEY 01:13:48

Yeah.

BILL 01:13:49

But in fact, the Northwest has a sordid history. Can we take a break? I need to pee.

HARVEY 01:14:01

I want to roll back on something that I ran over without asking about, and that was the '71 strike. You were around for that.

BILL 01:14:11

Yes, I was.

HARVEY 01:14:14

At that time, you were newly an A card person, right?

BILL 01:14:18

Yes.

HARVEY 01:14:19

Okay, what was your participation in the '71 strike?

BILL 01:14:23

Did my strike duty faithfully, crossed the bridge to San Francisco to do my strike duty on the south side of the ferry terminal, I think Pier 42, yeah.

HARVEY 01:14:41

What did that entail?

BILL 01:14:43

Oh, it entailed a picket sign and eating a lotta hot dogs, and drinking coffee. Basically just manning the spot, kind of, you know, there was no real marching done. And, you know, we sat on the bull rail and fished, and some of us tried to catch crab, and it was 134 days of getting to know each other really well.

HARVEY 01:15:14

What's the bull rail? I don't remember hearing that term before.

BILL 01:15:17

Bull rail is like the twelve by twelve timber that is there to keep the forklift or prevent things from going over the side into the water, generally made of wood. Actually, now it might be concrete, with the rails that the cranes run on, they put a big concrete step. Yeah, that's on the older piers.

HARVEY 01:15:49

Did you have any idea regarding—at that time, one of the underlying issues of the strike was going steady? Did you have any feelings regarding that?

BILL 01:15:59

9.43, oh, terrible, terrible. I can't tell you how many times I said, "Harry, you sold us out!" For which I, you know, I kind of regret it.

HARVEY 01:16:15

Did you actually talk to him?

BILL 01:16:16

Yeah, many times, I probably shook his hand a half a dozen times. And he was always the first to extend his hand, even though I was one of them Young Turks that he referred to sure that wanted things our way. But yes, 9.43 was very much an issue. Rich Austin put out the button that said "No 9.43" for that, around that contract. Every member wore that button that I can recall, except for, of course, the steadies.

HARVEY 01:16:48

What was your objection to going steady?

BILL 01:16:58

My objection was that one person was doing—one person could do many jobs in the course of a day to fill out his obligation to the employer. Out of the hall, it was one man, one job, and it was turned into—well, [pauses] steady employees have a way of becoming company people, or company minded, they have the interest of the company. All we need to do is get a little more production and we'll guarantee that there will be work. Well, Seattle can testify that that that's not what's happening. Seattle had the best production on the coast, it has no work now. The employer—and a lot of the membership don't understand the employers position their ships where it's most favorable to them. They could give less than a shit about production in Seattle, as long as they get their stuff on the road.

HARVEY 01:18:22

What about the idea that it has potential to sort of split the union, undermine the loyalty to the union.

BILL 01:18:34

Yeah, steady employees in LA got a lot of sway. Yeah, the political power of the union has shifted south, greatly.

HARVEY 01:18:49

But I mean the the idea that, if some guys are going steady, well, you already mentioned that their allegiance can be compromised, and the strength of the unity can be completely undermined. I don't mean—I shouldn't put words in your mouth.

BILL 01:19:10

An example of this would be a longshoreman who's now a foreman. First place the foreman rankles me, you go fucking walking boss. That's what they were, that's what they are, that's what they should fucking be called. They're walking bosses. He works steady for SSA [Stevedoring Services of America]. He has a notion that if he posts the production numbers for the crane operators out of the hall in Seattle, that it will embarrass them or some of them into doing more production, because it'll get more work for SSA, it'll get more work for eighteen. He's saying it would bring more work for Seattle, but it's actually, he's touting SSA, right? So I have taken him on several times, these posts to Facebook, I will reply, "What's this for? Why are you touting the employers' line? What's this for?"

HARVEY 01:20:19

Okay, you're in Seattle. It's—

BILL 01:20:26

'85?

HARVEY 01:20:27

Yeah, '85, and what year did you retire from waterfront?

BILL 01:20:31

I retired October 1st, 2009.

HARVEY 01:20:35

Okay, how old were you when you retired?

BILL 01:20:38

Sixty-three.

HARVEY 01:20:41

Okay.

BILL 01:20:42

Wanted to go earlier, but we were newly wed in '07, and my wife couldn't retire for a year and a half.

HARVEY 01:20:58

When did you first get married, the first time?

BILL 01:21:04

The first time I got married was, well, it was a common law marriage to the mother of my son Max, who's now the BA of Local 19. In '81 I had a short-lived marriage of six months. I married a woman that I knew for nineteen years. We had been dating at that point for a year and a half or so, and her son got shot, and as a result was quadriplegic, has been ever since. We got married a month after he got shot, the marriage lasted six months, and [sighs] excuse me, she couldn't live with the fact that her son had been shot, she went over the edge. Our relationship could not be salvaged. I was pulling all the weight, I was working the waterfront, coming home, getting her son into bed and out of bed, giving him his baths, getting in his— [sighs] stimulating his sphincter so he could have a bowel movement. It was all falling to me, and I couldn't be a longshoreman, too.

HARVEY 01:22:35

Yeah, it's demanding. I did a little bit in the Army as a medic.

BILL 01:22:45

I still have a great relationship—She has since passed away. She died of an aneurysm, she snorted cocaine on the job, died. I'm still very close with her sons, though, I have two African American stepsons that I'm close with, still in Berkeley.

HARVEY 01:23:01

That's good. Then you didn't get married again until '09?

BILL 01:23:07

Got married in '07.

HARVEY 01:23:09

I'm sorry, '07, you mentioned.

BILL 01:23:11

To another woman who I knew for thirty years, chased her for twenty. [laughs] And our connection was around the—When I came to Seattle, I was three years a traveler, which means you have no vote. You might have a voice if the membership will let you speak at a meeting. And I needed something political to plug into. So I heard that the Lincoln vets [Abraham Lincoln Brigade] of the Spanish Civil War, were having an event at the Seattle Center. They were sending a couple of ambulances to Nicaragua. I got wind of that, and I went to the event because I figured I would hook up—I could find somebody from the la Brigada Venceremos at an event like that.

So I went, I'm standing there, and somebody pulled my coat. I turned around, there's this cute young woman, I'm looking at her, and said "You traveling from San Francisco?."

"Yes?"

"Oh, my name's Kevin, Kevin Castle. That name mean anything?"

Del Castle's daughter? His daughter. Yeah, so we hit it up, became friends, and actually got a little bit serious about each other and were together better part of two years. She was part of the attraction that kept me there.

HARVEY 01:24:48

In Seattle?

BILL 01:24:49

Thirty days at a time as a traveler. Yeah, yeah. So having found a drug free life in Seattle then not knowing where to go, I knew where to go. I mean, when I left the job at night and I saw the guys on the corner, I knew what they were standing on the corner for, but I found the fortitude, the metal to just keep going. Go home, just go home.

HARVEY 01:25:18

Sure. Good for you. So you knew her a long time, and then you got married later?

BILL 01:25:29

Yeah, well, then at that meeting, I did connect with la Brigada Venceremos, and then I found out about a meeting. I went to a meeting, and Catalina was there. I found her very attractive, and over time, I got a little sweet on her, and I started chasing her when Kevin and I broke up, and she kept me at arm's length for twenty years, until she visited—We had a very platonic friendship. She came to check out my spot in Mexico for four days in July 2006. I stayed in the trailer, initially, and she stayed in the house. It was coming to completion. It was all concrete, just fly screens, no windows, the fly screen and shutters. And we arrived as platonic friends, and we left as lovers. And she accepted my [?bottom up?] later, she accepted my proposal for marriage, and we married January 1, 2007. That midnight, five minutes after midnight, January 1.

HARVEY 01:26:52

That's nice. You said you had a house in Mexico. How did that come about?

BILL 01:26:59

I was 54 years old. I had been visiting at that point for five or six years, visiting a friend who was building his, or their retirement home on a beach in Nayarit, about twenty-five miles north of Puerto Vallarta. I visited them for Christmas, and then I was back for a visit the next year, and the next year. And the next year, and getting to know the local people, getting to know the community of expats at the time that were there, I found a sense of community, and I started looking for something of a beach lot, I thought, but the beach lots were too damned expensive. The last time I looked at a beach lot, it was like fifteen meters wide and forty meters deep with high bank beach for 110,000 US dollars. No, that's too much.

I got a call from Susie, my friend's wife, "Billy, there's some big lots across the road for a lot less money." I was down there two days later, and I wound up leaving earnest money for a little over half an acre. I purchased it with a borrowed name from a Mexican, put [?Presta Nombre?]. That was in 2000. And 2002, after I constructed two structures—paid for, I didn't do the work, I just come with a bundle of money, shake a hand, contract's on a handshake. God, I loved it. Half now, half when I'm done, okay, shake hand. Come back in three months and it's done. Anyway.

HARVEY 01:29:01

Remarkable home. By then did you know Spanish?

BILL 01:29:06

Not as well as I should at this point. But I'm learning. I speak enough to get by, to be understood, and I have to ask them to slow down, because when they're talking to each other, they can run on, you know. But you find that when you speak another people's language, just trying to speak, they appreciate it and respect it a lot. So anyway, I found a lot, and I now have a trust that's good for another twenty-eight years.

HARVEY 01:29:50

So you visit now and then, is that it?

BILL 01:29:54

I lived there while I was still working.

HARVEY 01:29:56

Yeah? How could you live in Mexico and still be working out of Local 19?

BILL 01:30:03

Well, when I was working, I would spend time there.

HARVEY 01:30:07

Yeah, okay.

BILL 01:30:13

It would be a mad dash when my wife had her month's vacation and me being longshoreman, you know, I could work one day now and sixty days later, work another day. It was a mad dash to drive down there, spend some time, and drive back.



HARVEY 01:30:32

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BILL 01:30:34

Well, for the last six years now, I've been living there. I've been living in Mexico.

HARVEY 01:30:41

So you're in Mexico most of most of the year?

BILL 01:30:44

Most of the year, yeah.

HARVEY 01:30:46

Is your wife still with you?

BILL 01:30:47

Oh yeah, she's here.

HARVEY 01:30:49

Yeah, okay, I thought she might be. Okay, let me take a little bit of a quick look at this list. Did you ever run for office in Local 19?

BILL 01:31:04

I did. Executive Board, Crane Safety, both of which I achieved when I ran. As I said earlier, I never aspired to be anybody's leader. I know that I don't know what I'm doing half the time, [laughs] and I don't want to be leading anybody astray. Just do the work, just show up. That's my thing, just show up.

HARVEY 01:31:35

How do you go from being a break bulk longshoreman to become a crane driver? How did that happen?

BILL 01:31:44

Well, had I stayed in the port of San Francisco, Oakland, I'd have never gotten into crane. Employers never would have chosen me to be crane supplement or 9.43. I was too much of a shit disturber. In fact, I carried that reputation with me to Seattle. I arrived to Seattle—

HARVEY 01:32:08

Why do you think it makes you a shit disturber?

BILL 01:32:11

I'm sorry, what?

HARVEY 01:32:13

What makes you appear to be such a shit disturber?

BILL 01:32:20

Adherence to contract. I arrived Seattle, I'm a traveler. I get a job lashing, drop and go, got to release the lashings. Go to the job, the ship has just come in, there's no safety net on. And I watched the fellow traveler, the fellow lashers out of Local 19 going up to 45 degree, quite steep, quite high gangway before the safety net is hung. Ten feet before the head of the ladder and ten feet beyond the foot of the ladder, and draped under it, to catch in case the man falls, not just in case the man falls, but in case the whole gangway falls, which I've seen happen. I just stand there and wait for the gang.

"Come on, come on, labor faker, time to go to work!"

"I'll see you when they get the net hung."

So, shit disturber, not doing it their way.

HARVEY 01:33:20

Right, right, right, right.

BILL 01:33:22

When in Rome, not doing like the Romans.

HARVEY 01:33:24

Yeah, no, I understand.

BILL 01:33:26

Contract guy.

HARVEY 01:33:29

Is there any particular situation or event that you recall on the waterfront, or other otherwise with the union that you were participating in or that you remember in that period between about 1985 and when you when you retired? And you retire about—What year did you retire? '09, yeah. I mean, I'm thinking 1999, you know, the event in Seattle?

BILL 01:34:01

Oh the, WTO [World Trade Organization]?

HARVEY 01:34:02

WTO, for example. But are there other examples of—we will hit that one, because that's kind of a biggie. But anything else between 1985 and 1999 that you recall, that you participated in, that you remember, you can describe?

BILL 01:34:18

Hmm, gosh, no, no. Nothing sticks out in my mind.

HARVEY 01:34:32

What about 1999? Do you remember your participation in—

BILL 01:34:37

My participation was just show up. Just show up. You know, I pushed around the hall, you know, you guys gonna participate. You know, the union was behind it, so it was an easy thing to urge participation in, and I guess in that instance, I wasn't a shit disturber, just one of them. I didn't play any leading role or anything. I participated.

HARVEY 01:35:08

Okay, do you remember any confrontation with the authorities or anything like that? Because there were some big events, as I recall, some face-offs.

BILL 01:35:16

There were, but I was not involved. Yeah.

HARVEY 01:35:18

Okay, okay, trying to get that. Right, let's see. Did you stay for your whole life in the Party, as a Party person?

BILL 01:35:41

I joined the Party following my Cuba experience. Following my experience in Cuba, I joined my mother's Party. She was so proud of me. And I was, I was active with a San Francisco club. I left there, I came north, I made contact with the Party. I eventually rejoined or renewed my membership, I should say, because I had left during my drug era. At least I had a good sense to remove myself from the Party at that time. And I found the Party such as it existed in Seattle, kind of staunchy, kind of staid, kind of stuck in an era that I was no longer familiar with. I'll just put it like that. But nonetheless, you know, can't affect change if you're not part of it. So I joined, rejoined, only to be expelled in '89 in Cleveland, along with my mother, who had been a member since 1940, continuous, did not abandon the Party around Hungary or Czechoslovakia, wasn't anti-Stalinist, was a good red.

HARVEY 01:37:41

They expelled your mother and you? Why?

BILL 01:37:45

Why was she?

HARVEY 01:37:48

Yeah, if you were both expelled at the same time in '89, why were you expelled at that point?

BILL 01:37:53

Well, it wasn't just us, it was practically the entire party in state of California, mostly Northern California, people such as Herb Aptheker, Angela Davis, these intellectual giants purged from the Party because they didn't told Gus [Hall]'s fucking line. We're not going to discuss perestroika and what the fuck it is. Party was having nothing, wasn't gonna have it, the organized Party wasn't gonna have it. I showed up in Cleveland to be an observer. I rode the elevator up with my mom to the level of the hotel where the meeting was taking place, and she was denied entry. Even though she was a delegate from Northern California, she was denied entry by a guy who looked to be eighteen years old, and I wanted to drop him. I just wanted to drop him, but it wasn't him I wanted to drop.

It was Gus Hall. I wanted to—I did security for Northern California. Gus Hall would come to town, unlike Henry Winston, chairman of the Party, blind man, blinded during his years imprisoned under the Smith Act. He [Winston] would come to town, he would stay with the comrades' family. He would eat from their table. Gus Hall come to town, he stayed at the fucking Sheraton palace. You had to have two rooms, one for him, one for his security detail. He had to have somebody in the car for twenty-four hours a day that he was in town, in case somebody was going to put a bomb in this car, all this fucking bullshit. Get up, it's breakfast time. I think, come on, fellas I'll buy you breakfast. [?This is?] Gus. I think we're going downstairs to the fucking cafe and Sheraton palace. It's still gonna be pricey, right? No, we walk down, we cross Market Street, we go around the fucking corner to the fucking Blue Fox, the oldest French restaurant in the city of San Francisco, and there he's gonna fucking buy breakfast and I see coke, I see coffee and toast. Eight fucking bucks. What the fuck. "Don't worry, fellas, it's on my dime." Not your dime, that's them fucking PW's [People's World, Communist Party newspaper] I'm selling for a quarter. What the fuck, you know? I don't have much to say about this. I just had a lot to say about this. [laughs]

HARVEY 01:40:32

Okay, so you're no longer an active member after '89?

BILL 01:40:37

No, I'm still a communist, though. [laughs]

HARVEY 01:40:43

I believe you. [laughs]

BILL 01:40:45

I do the best. I do the best I can. [laughs]

HARVEY 01:40:49

Absolutely. Let me take a look at my little list here and see what I'm doing. You retire in '09, you're 63 years old. What do you do with your retirement, for the most part?

BILL 01:41:05

Be retired, I just be retired. If it looks like work, I don't want to do it. My interests are fishing, dominoes, my kids, my grandkids.

HARVEY 01:41:27

Are you still a trout fisherman?

BILL 01:41:28

Beg your pardon?

HARVEY 01:41:29

Do you still fish for trout?

BILL 01:41:33

I haven't really done any trout fishing for some time. When you live close to the ocean, its hard. And there—Actually, I've heard of two places where there are trout. That one is a real project to get to, it's a long hike in and a long hike out in the heat. No interest in that one. And the other one is he's the secretary of our homeowners association on the beach where he has two properties, one on the beach and one about an hour and a half out of town, a ranch where he's putting in a trout pond. And uh I might get to fish there one day, who knows. Who knows, but I do fish in the ocean.

HARVEY 01:42:27

You do? What kind of fish?

BILL 01:42:29

Yeah, [?surge?] fish. Sometimes we'll hire a boat, we'll go out and try for tuna. That's quite expensive.

HARVEY 01:42:40

Now, how long you've been living in Mexico? How long now, you mentioned it?

BILL 01:42:44

Full time? About six years now.

HARVEY 01:42:45

Six years. Yeah, right. What about the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association? Have you had any contact with them? I mean, you're living in Mexico, makes it difficult to go to PCPA meetings in Seattle when you're living in Mexico. How does that work out?

BILL 01:43:00

Well, it works out that I attend meetings when I happen to be in town on the first Monday of the month for medical issues or something related to the family, I will attend meetings. Yeah, our meetings, though, the meetings are happy occasions, get together, have a raffle. Maybe you win the bottle of booze, maybe you get the candy, maybe you can get the wine, or maybe you can win the \$50 draw. That's about it. There's no, "Oh, okay, give a little money to a food bank. Give some money to the Christmas for kids program. We'll give \$1,000 to the Bloody Thursday picnic." Social activity, discussion of elections, we get a report from the local president, we get a report from Andrea, that's it. That's it. I guess we struggle every year to put on a I think this area, to put on a luncheon in May. That's the struggle.

HARVEY 01:44:38

You said, to put on a luncheon?

BILL 01:44:39

Every May, the retirees luncheon, it's a struggle. That's the only struggle that that club is involved in.

HARVEY 01:44:49

Okay, it doesn't sound like it piques your interest too strongly. I mean, you'd be more interested, I presume, if they were more politically active in the community.

BILL 01:45:00

Yes, of course. I would be.

HARVEY 01:45:05

Let's see. Conor, do you have questions?

CONOR 01:45:17

Yeah, you mentioned a little bit about when you first came on the waterfront, and about how the old timers showed you how to carry the hides and stuff, some of those tricks. You know, so much longshoring is face to face culture, and you were in this era that was a transition between containerization and all that stuff. Can you remember any both tips and tricks that they taught you about, sort of the tools of the trade, but also like attitudes, like the dignity of work, or like how fast you're supposed to work, or different attitudes that were conveyed to you as a new member?

BILL 01:45:53

[pauses] Some of the men that built the union were willing to share their experience, and some were just standoffish, maybe even mean in their demeanor, "damn kids" or "damn hippies, damn hippies, long hair." And '67, well, summer loves was the next year, right? I'll never forget Bob Rohatch, President Bob Rohatch has followed Cleophas [Williams] into the presidency. "Get a haircut, damn hippie!" He was the president. I'm standing at the fucking mic! [laughs] Okay! It's just funny. That's all there is to it.

CONOR 01:47:17

Did any of that change after you all were on the picket line in '71?



BILL 01:47:25

Yeah, you know, I did my picket duty with guys who were '63, '65 and '67 hires, right? So we were newer guys on the waterfront. The old timers were mostly with old timers. Yeah, the strike is a fond memory for me. I don't have any bad memories of it, you know, it was a trying time for a lot of our families, I'm sure. But for me, it was—well, my wife was working, mother, she was working at UW, I mean, UC Berkeley. I had my hammer and I could pull out and do odd jobs for people, that's how we made it through that half a year. Nothing else to...

When, when you worked with old timers in the hold, that's when they really gave it to you. They didn't know shit about containers, how to work containers. It was something they didn't they didn't really want to do. They wanted to do what they knew. They wanted to drive winches, they wanted to be front men, they wanted to drive a bull. They did what they were familiar with. And that shit's for you guys, and the stuff that they didn't want to do from the old days, like the hides or the 180 pound sacks of coffee, that fell to our younger backs. That was good, you know.

Foreman god, the walking—San Francisco had walking bosses. We also had gang bosses. The gang boss would carry the time. Some gang bosses showed up in the morning, showed up after months, but weren't there, left the direction to the walking boss. But the real gang bosses told the fucking superintendent, "Get the fuck away from my gang. I got them. I got them covered. Just don't fuck with them." And workers can organize themselves better than any company can. Yeah, how to hide the hook in your hand when you're working coffee. "You don't let them see that hook, they don't like that." Proper use of the hook, where to use it to move that crate, you know, you grab it up here, grab it down there. It depends on how much weight, where the weight is, and you find that in just a couple of wacks and a couple of pulls.

CONOR 01:50:34

That's interesting. Are you saying that you would hide it in your hand because the bosses would worry about you damaging the cargo, but you knew it was better for ergonomics for yourself?

BILL 01:50:42

Yeah, you grab a sack, you grab an ear with one hand, and your hook is getting most of the weight. You got an ear here, and you're not really on the other end, you're about two thirds of the way across the stack with the hook. Tear that. Tear it. Yeah.

CONOR 01:51:00

That sounds familiar, yeah.

BILL 01:51:04

But working cinnamon and pepper was worse than coffee, the sacks were lighter, but the sacks tore. Something about the humidity in the hatch or something, or the within the commodity, that the hemp of the of the [?cocoa?] sack or the [?gunny?] sack would just be very flimsy.

HARVEY 01:51:30

I always heard some of the San Franciscans like the long Japanese hooks.

BILL 01:51:34

Yes.

HARVEY 01:51:35

Why were they such an advantageous tool?

BILL 01:51:40

The reach, for one, you didn't have to bend as far. More durable, and I think, more uses for it than you did with the traditional—different hooks had the different uses. That was, you had a lumber hook that had more of a L shape than a curve. Gosh, it was all kinds.

HARVEY 01:52:14

You mean it was—a Japanese hook was more—what is the term—flexible? Different uses could be—you could do different things?

BILL 01:52:22

Yeah. You keep them sharp for it to be able to penetrate wood, but you also want it to come out easily, And that Japanese hook was better for working crates, simply because it offered more of a lever, I think. The curved hook, there were not many uses for it that I can think of. I don't think I ever used one, as a matter of fact.

HARVEY 01:53:11

That's the more traditional or famous one you're talking about? Less useful, you're saying?

BILL 01:53:15

Yeah, like the one that's depicted on our logo, right? Like that one. That hook, those large hooks. I don't recall seeing many of those. There were some old timers that would have them in their pocket, you would see the handle sticking out. I can't recall ever seeing one used in the hold. Japanese hooks were more common, I think.

HARVEY 01:53:39

Yeah, so you use that in the in the the little coffee hook, the little little guy. Did you know Gene Vrana when you were on the waterfront in San Francisco?

BILL 01:53:52

Yes, I knew Gene. In fact, I worked in the gang that he worked in before he got injured, or when he got injured, I was in that gang, and I left going nightside and got on drugs. Yeah, I knew Gene when he was Gene Dennis.

HARVEY 01:54:10

Right. I thought of connection with you for several reasons, but in part, the Japanese hook, because he always liked it, too. Told me a lot about it. You have another question?

CONOR 01:54:30

You talked about being a traveler, you talked about working in different locals, and also some experience you had with people who were dispatchers in different halls. Can you talk about the different dispatch systems each one of the locals had, and what it was like for you to interact with that? Like, I know Tacoma had that low man distribution method, and then there was other distribution methods. And everybody talks about how important the hiring and dispatch hall are, but not everyone talks about how there's different systems and different—

BILL 01:54:56

There's different rotational systems, yeah. I think Tacoma, to this day, uses money. I'm not certain about that, but there have been ports, and I think it was Tacoma, at one time, you had to declare your earnings. And low man out. San Francisco, hours when I started, you had to carry your hours, and you got to a certain point, got too low, you had to take the average. You wanted your hours low so you could get the prime job. [?Better shot?] did a good job. Sharpshooters. And Seattle uses the peg system. You just put your name, put your peg in a hole, and when it gets to you, it gets to you. The hour system, there are ways to gimmick it. A quarter hour here, a half hour there, to get low for the next day. And then you add that, that you left off of this day, you add it back on a day when the peg's gonna move. [laughs]

CONOR 01:56:20

You know, one other thing I kind of wonder about, and I think you might be the right generation to ask about this, is people often talk about how the ILWU was sort of a sanctuary during the time when they screened out the seamen and they dumped other folks. But also that casual, you talked about how you could work a few hours and be able to survive and have rent. Did you notice that it was also an incubator for, like, arts and culture, like, I know the Beats would get jobs, that was in the '40's, '50's. But was it sustaining a broader arts community that you were aware of when you were working down there?

BILL 01:56:58

I don't know about whether it was supporting—There were a number of guys who wrote, painted, Indian Joe Morris, he was a hell of a painter. Eddie Holden was a painter. Al Valenzuela, a poet. [pauses] I see their faces, I can't recall their names. There were a lot of hippies that found their place, at least for a little while, in the industry.

HARVEY 01:57:51

Do you remember the waterfront writers who published a book? Were you involved?

BILL 01:57:57

That's what I was trying to think, the name was two of them, two guys.

HARVEY 01:58:01

Yeah no, [?Vanet?] was one.

BILL 01:58:03

I'm thinking one's chewing a cigar.

HARVEY 01:58:05

Herb Mills was involved. George Benet was involved.

BILL 01:58:08

George Benet. George Benet, that was what name I was looking for. And Herb, of course, he was a writer.

HARVEY 01:58:19

And Gene Vrana, too, was within the group. Did you know those guys well, I mean, did you—

BILL 01:58:29

I rode with Herb to and from work for a year and a half. We were in the same gang. I knew Gene through political circles, you know, like-minded folks.

HARVEY 01:58:53

Did you have long hair at the time when Rohatch gave you a bad time? You were sporting a long haired look?

BILL 01:59:02

No, I had a white boy's afro. I got it ballooned up as big as I could get it. Yeah. It just happened that my son downloaded a picture of me speaking at the '79 convention at the Western Hotel in Seattle, where we introduced the resolution to boycott South Africa, Leo and I, and I had hair. When I looked at it, I thought, that's when I had hair. Bell bottoms, the whole work.

CONOR 01:59:43

Do you remember—you talked a little bit about that, but do you remember what that process was like, how you felt when you were introducing the resolution?

BILL 01:59:50

When I was what?

CONOR 01:59:51

When you were introducing that resolution in Seattle? You talked a little about being involved, but I was just wondering how it felt when you were doing it?

BILL 01:59:57

Well, Leo, who introduced it, and it was—As I said, Leo had urged me to find my voice, and it was around that issue that I found my voice, to back him around the work we do. It needed a white voice, too, not just old Archie Brown, you know. Needed a new rep. The Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee came about, about a month after I had invited Leo and a guy named Charlie White over to the house to meet my dad, to meet Roscoe Proctor. And in that discussion, the discussion started around South Africa, and as the discussion went on, my dad expanded the conversation. "Well, you know, Leo, there's Angola and Mozambique, there's Namibia. There's the whole realm, the whole southern Africa." And the light went off in Leo's head. I didn't see it, but a week later, he said, "We're forming a Southern Africa Liberation Support Committee, we're not just dealing about this South Africa." And that's when we did the container for Mozambique, shoes and clothes.

CONOR 02:01:21

You think, was it your dad's internationalism and political scope that you think influenced that?

BILL 02:01:28

It was the education around the centrality of the struggle against racism, that I related to the struggle against apartheid. It's part of our struggle, too, very much a part of our struggle.

HARVEY 02:01:52

Do you have another question? You're good? What did I miss? Is there anything important that I missed?

BILL 02:02:09

See, that's quite a question. I can't—No, I can't think of anything. I can't think of anything I would add.

HARVEY 02:02:23

Okay, do you have any final comment at all? I mean, sometimes, you get to this point in the interview, and with some people, it's obvious. The question, looking back, what did it mean to you? I mean, it's kind of like, kind of covers that. But if there's anything in that regard you'd like to add at all, you know, a wrap up question. If you want a final say of some sort.

BILL 02:02:48

[pauses] I have this question that bothers me. I don't know why our population is not more aware that there's this thing called class struggle, that there is actual class struggle. There are actual classes of people. Well, I just, you know...

HARVEY 02:03:39

There's a lot of propaganda against—On a major television station, they're not going to tell you you're in a—

BILL 02:03:45

Capitalist's gotta look out for his interests, you know.

HARVEY 02:03:48

Yeah, we use the term "middle class." We want to make all the workers and then the middle class. Middle class rights are being fought for, according to the Democrats. The language is important.

BILL 02:04:02

Yeah, working class, middle class, and working people. Who are those working people? Who are those working people? Those are the \$2 an hour table servers. Fuck!

HARVEY 02:04:13

Yeah, of course.

BILL 02:04:15

So say it, "We're trying to help poor people." But the two party, capitalist system. What are we gonna do? Its a bourgeois fucking democracy.